

Text of MCC 2017 Valedictorian Address
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Hello my name is Blenda Church and although many of you do not know me, I know even more of you will not remember this speech. But we are here today to celebrate the graduating class of 2017.

I am standing here, representing each and everyone of you.

I have learned many things here at MCC. I am graduating today with a degree in Radiation Therapy. For the past three years I have learned about the bodily systems, I have learned about the physics of an x-ray tube, I have learned about the causes of cancer, I have learned that mammographies are important, but most importantly I have learned that I can make a difference to any patient.

I would like to share a quote with you that describes how I feel. This comes from Sheryl Sandberg , Chief Operating Officer of Facebook and this is from Harvard's 2014 Commencement.

"There is no straight path from your seat today to where you are going. Don't try to draw that line. You will not just get it wrong, you'll miss big opportunities. And I mean big. Careers are not ladders, those days are long gone, but jungle gyms. Don't just move up and down, don't just look up, look backwards, sideways around corners. Your career and your life will

have starts and stops and zigs and zags. Don't stress out about the white space—the path you can't draw— because therein lies both the surprises and the opportunities."

I have learned that life is not like a ladder, not just a straight path. Having just turned 30, and especially now as a return to college student, I have realized that I have zigged and zagged. Most of the time I have moved forward, but sometimes moving backwards.

Having experienced the start and stop motion of graduating with my bachelor's degree and trying out a few different career paths from being a legal assistant to human resources to being a waitress to even being a fitness instructor, I now see that it all led me to an opportunity to go back to school. I now find myself in a career that I find truly fulfilling as a radiation therapist.

I have learned that it is from these backwards and sideways movements that we gain our strength. What we have all achieved is remarkable and we need to always remember what it took to finish our degrees. Everything that you and I have accomplished is the source of strength that will propel us up and over any mountain.

This is for all of those nights we stayed up until 2 AM writing that paper that we put off for weeks.

This is for all those weekend shifts that you picked up at work even though you knew you had an exam on Monday.

This is for all those times you set an alarm at 5:30, 5:35, and 5:40 because you weren't sure you would be able to get out of bed before the sun was up.

This is for all those late night workouts at the 24 hour gym because you accidentally ate an entire box of Oreos while studying.

But most of all, this is for all of you. You have all worked very hard to get to where you are today.

In conclusion, (yes, I have also learned that just when you think people stop paying attention you should say "in conclusion") SO: in conclusion, congratulations on all that you have achieved and all of your sacrifices you have made in order to make this day come true. The next time you are facing an obstacle, don't be afraid to draw strength from this experience. And remember, don't be afraid to play on that jungle gym.

Thank you